"R. L. S." AS METEOROLOGIST.

The Boston Evening Transcript of March 16, 1921, contains an editorial on Robert Louis Stevenson which is of interest to every meteorologist. This editorial, in part, follows:

The passing of the Scottish Meteorological Society, which has been merged in the Royal Meteorological Society of England, calls attention to the little known activities of "R. L. S." "R. L. S.," who was destined to be known to the world because of his works of fiction, his essays, and his letters, included among his earlier attempts at writing at least two articles upon that subject of perennial interest, the weather. It was a logical activity. His father, his uncles, and his grandfather followed a profession in which they were called upon to make exhaustive study of the force of wind and wave and the means of overcoming the terror of the darkness of the fog at sea. Alan Stevenson, the grandfather, designed many lighthouses on the Scottish coast, including the structure which rose on Bell Rock. Thomas Stevenson, the father, in his turn took up the work, and was one of the engineers to the commissioners of northern lighthouses from 1855 until his death 30 years later. At the same time he developed a keen interest in meteorology. He was one of the organizers of the Scottish society, and he invented a screen for thermometers by means of which temperature records were kept with greater accuracy.

The boy, Robert, accompanied his father on many trips of inspection along the Scottish coast. It was natural in undertaking some of his early writings he should return to the subjects with which these boyish experiences had familiarized him. Readers of stories of his life will recall that in 1871, when he was but 21 years old, he received a silver medal from the Edinburgh Society of Arts for a paper suggesting improvements in lighthouse apparatus. It is not so well known that soon after he was participating in the proceedings of the Scottish Meteorological Society and was the author of a paper on "Local conditions influencing climate." It was followed by an article contributed to the publications of the Royal Society of Edinburgh under the title, "The Thermal Influence of Forests." Only an abstract of the first paper appears to have been printed. The second was published in full.

The memory of Stevenson is revered by Californians, as he once lived in a house which fronted on Portsmouth Square, San Francisco. In the center of this square stands what is perhaps the only monument erected to Stevenson in the United States. This monument is appropriately crowned with a bronze Spanish galleon with full-blown sails—a fitting reminder of one who attained distinction both in meteorology and in literature. The memorial suggests one of his most famous lines, "Home is the wanderer, home from the sea."—*A. H. Palmer.*

NEW RAINFALL NORMALS ADOPTED BY THE BRITISH METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE.

[Abstract from the *Meteorological Magazine*, London, February, 1921, pp. 10-11.]

Since 1910, the rainfall normals used by the Meteorological Magazine, including its predecessor, Symons's Meteorological Magazine, have been those based on the 35-year period 1875–1909. In the Book of Normals of Meteorological Elements, which is in course of publication, the normals used are those based on the new 35-year period 1881–1915. Beginning with the February, 1921, issue of the Meteorological Magazine, these new normals are employed.

The chief advantage claimed for the new normals lies in the fact that the number of complete records is considerably greater than for the old. The choice of stations for the tables is thus widened and a more satisfactory representation of the country as a whole secured. In order to compare the two sets of normals, 118 stations with unbroken records in both series were plotted so as to express the new normals in percentages of the old. A table is provided showing these percentages month by month for each of the sections—England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland—and for the British Isles as a whole. An examination of this table shows extremes in the British Isles from 90 per cent in September to 108 per cent in December. The general values for the whole year for the British Isles are practically identical for the two periods of 35-year normals.—*H. L.*

ASCENSION ISLAND.

[Reprinted from the *Meteorological Magazine*, London, February, 1921, pp. 19-20.]

Arrangements are now being completed for the establishment of a fully equipped second order station at Ascension Island, in the Atlantic Ocean, latitude 7° 55′ S., longitude 14° 25′ W. Incomplete observations have been taken since April, 1917, at two stations in the island, Garrison and Mountain, but, unfortunately, with the exception of the barometer, the instruments hitherto in use have not been tested, and many require large corrections.

Thanks to the interest of Maj. C. H. Malden, R. M. L.I., who is in charge of the wireless station, a full set of instruments has been sent out, and full reports based on observations taken three times daily should soon be available.

Meteorological records from Ascension have hitherto been of the scantiest, covering only those taken at the Garrison station by the captain of the H. M. S. *Tortoise*, 1853 to 1861, full observations for two years 1863 to 1865 by Lieut. Rokeby, and less complete observations from October, 1906, to the end of 1907.

A permanent observatory there is greatly to be desired.

METEOROLOGY IN AUSTRALIA.

[Reprinted from the *Meteorological Magazine*, London, February, 1921, p. 19.]

An interesting account of the Australian Meteorological Service is given in an article on "Floods and Gales in Australia," which appeared in the Australian Sunday Times of October 24, 1920. The writer of the article draws attention to the practical value of the warnings issued by the bureau in preventing damage to shipping and destruction of stock. An industry for which warnings are of prime importance is fruit drying, for unheralded rain would cause enormous losses.

In times of heavy rainfall the bureau is able to give special advices of rises and rates of flow of flood crests. A recent warning, seven days in advance, of an impending arrival of a big flood crest at Brewarrina, New South Wales, was fulfilled to within a few hours. Before the oncoming inundation had reached this area countless sheep, horses, and movable effects were taken to higher land and thousands of pounds worth of stock and property saved. On this occasion the old hands who predicted that there would be no flood were entirely mistaken in their sanguine view.

The article is illustrated by some interesting flood photographs, including one of a piano resting 30 feet above the normal level of the neighboring creek in the branches of a tree. A picture of a sheet of galvanized iron which had been hurled by wind at a post and folded into the semblance of a lady's fan may also be mentioned.

The range of climate in Australia being so wide, expert advice is of great value in the selection of districts for the establishment of manufactures which depend on suitable atmospheric conditions, and the importance of this side of the work of the bureau is duly emphasized.